



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume LVII, Number 6

Chicago, Illinois

March 1997

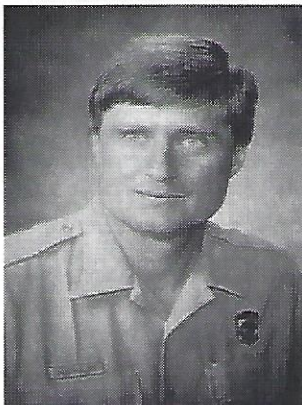
## Dale K. Phillips on "Ben Butler and the Occupation of New Orleans"

by Barbara Hughett

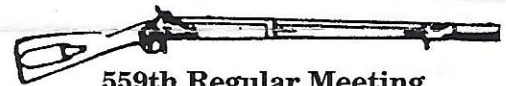
GENERAL Benjamin Franklin Butler was one of the most colorful and controversial commanders of the American Civil War. An astute criminal lawyer and active politician before the war, he became perhaps the most political of the "political generals." No matter where this individual served—whether it be in Baltimore, Fortress Monroe, New Orleans, on the James River, or at Fort Fisher—the very mention of his name could evoke an emotional response. Nowhere was this emotion stronger than in the city of New Orleans. Even today, a popular sales item in the city is a reproduction of a Civil War chamber pot with the likeness of General Butler painted inside the bottom of the pot. The citizens of New Orleans created the concept for this novelty item in 1862—in response to what they viewed as the dictator-like behavior of the commander of the Army of the Gulf.

Ben Butler only had control over New Orleans and the other areas of Louisiana occupied by Federal forces from April to December of 1862; however, some of the most controversial actions made by any commander during the entire War took place during these few short months. On March 14, Dale K. Phillips will address The Round Table on the topic of "Ben Butler and the Occupation of New Orleans." In his address, Phillips will try to explain why General Butler made these controversial decisions. Whether Butler's actions be judged right or wrong will be left to the listeners.

He will talk about the vital importance of New Orleans to the Confederacy and the relative lack of attention paid to the city by the government in Richmond, Virginia. Mr. Phillips will discuss the situations confronting the General as he attempted to control the largest city in the South with an initial force of fewer than 5,000 green soldiers. A focus will be placed on the reasons behind some of Butler's more daring actions, such as the confiscation of private property, the recruiting of African American troops, and his famous (or infamous) Woman Order No. 28. Phillips will also examine



Dale K. Phillips



### 559th Regular Meeting

☆ ☆ ☆

Dale K. Phillips on "Ben Butler and the Occupation of New Orleans"

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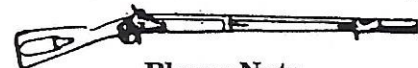
Friday, March 14

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Union League Club  
65 West Jackson Boulevard

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.  
\$25 - The Civil War Round Table of Chicago members  
\$30 - Nonmembers

*Entree:* Grilled Breast of Chicken with Pesto Cream Sauce or Catch of the Day



### Please Note

Make your reservation by Wednesday, March 12, by calling Registrar Carole Le Claire at 847-698-1438. People who attend without having made a reservation will pay a \$5 walk-in charge. If you make a reservation and then find you cannot attend, please call to cancel or you will be billed for a dinner. **No last-minute orders for the Catch of the Day can be honored. The chef must have at least twenty-four hours notice.**

The Union League Club is located at the corner of Jackson Boulevard and Federal Street. Federal Street runs north and south between Dearborn and Clark Streets. Parking is available at the General Parking lot, just south of the Union League Club, at the rate of \$5 per car.

the world-wide reaction to these measures that led to the placing of a reward on the life of General Butler by the Confederate government.

Ben Butler was ordered to accomplish what was probably the most difficult combination of administrative and military responsibilities of the entire War in

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## THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Founded December 3, 1940  
601 South La Salle Building, Suite C-817  
Chicago Illinois 60605  
Phone: 847-698-1438

### Officers

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*Founding Newsletter Editor: Gil Twiss, 1954-1968*

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The only requirement for membership in The Round Table is a genuine interest in the Civil War and its era. For information, address Membership Committee, 601 South La Salle Building, Suite C-817, Chicago, Illinois 60605.

The Civil War Round Table of Milwaukee continues working on plans for its 50th anniversary celebration, set for October 3, 4, and 5, at the Wisconsin Club in Milwaukee. Speakers will include John Y. Simon, Alan T. Nolan, and Kent Gramm. Milwaukee's own First Brigade Band will be performing. More information will be posted in this *Newsletter* over the next few months.

## BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

☆ UPDATE ☆

by David Richert

The Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park will acquire 8.5 acres on Marye's Heights at Fredericksburg. The tract rises above the Sunken Road, abutting the National Cemetery on one side and Mary Washington College on the other. According to Park Superintendent Marti Leicester, the addition of the tract will enable people to appreciate the Confederate experience at Fredericksburg, noting "we now have the ability to recreate the high ground that Lee held and recreate that experience." Park historian Robert Krick calls the purchase "the most important one at a national military park in Virginia in probably several decades." The Civil War Trust is assisting the park in meeting the \$1.65 million asking price.

On a less positive note, the Orange County Board of Supervisors wants to widen Route 20, the old Orange Turnpike, from two to four lanes through the Wilderness battlefield. In addition, some local residents are calling for major improvements, including turn lanes and a stoplight, at the intersection in front of the Chancellorsville Tavern site. It was to this crossroads that Lee rode at the culmination of the battle to be greeted by the cheers of his troops. The Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park would be required to give up land for both projects. The park is attempting to convince officials that alternate routes away from the battlefield would satisfy demand for improved transportation.

**Manassas National Military Park** is seeking public opinion on a new general management plan. Among issues to be addressed are: Should the park visitor center, prominently sited in the midst of battle action on Henry Hill, be moved? Should both battles receive equal interpretive weight? Currently, First Manassas gets most of the attention. How far should the park service go in restoring the 1860s appearance? Much of the land that is heavily wooded today was open ground at the time of the battle. The park's last general management plan dates from 1983, well before a 1988 boundary expansion that not only added to the park's acreage but increased the prominence of the battle of Second Manassas. It is expected the new plan would go into effect in 1998. For further information write Manassas National Military Park, 12521 Lee Highway, Manassas, Virginia 20109, or call 703-754-1861.

**Rev. Andrew Greeley**, author of *Irish Lace*, a mystery in which Camp Douglas and Civil War Chicago plays a prominent role, will address the annual luncheon of the **Stephen A. Douglas Association** on Saturday, April 12. The luncheon, which begins at 12:30 p.m., will be held at the Prairie Restaurant in the Hyatt on Printers Row, 500 S. Dearborn. The cost is \$25 per person. The luncheon will be preceded by ceremonies at the Douglas Tomb, 636 E. 35th St. For further information, or to make a reservation, contact David Richert, 6959A N. Hamilton Avenue, Chicago, IL 60645 (312) 558-6900 ext 119. Please make checks payable to the Stephen A. Douglas Association.



☞ FEBRUARY MEETING ☞

by Larry Gibbs

On February 21, at the 558th regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table, 97 members and guests heard fellow member Bruce Allardice give an informative, engaging speech entitled "Civil War Generals: Poltroons, Patriots, Politicians." The author of many articles in Civil War magazines, Allardice is perhaps best known as the author of *More Generals in Gray*, a valuable reference book. He has served as the quizmaster for The Round Table for the past several years. His presentation explained how men became Confederate or Union generals.

In April, 1861, the U.S. army was extremely small. According to Allardice, "At the start of the war there were only four field generals, all near retirement age; none saw any active service. The army numbered 16,000 men and contained only 76 officers with a rank of major or above. Officers totalled only 1,108. By contrast, the two Civil War armies eventually needed over 1,000 generals." As a result, any officer in the prewar U.S. army had the opportunity to rise to general quickly.

Before the Civil War, West Point did not teach a cadet to be a general. The curriculum provided a general liberal arts education. While drill and basic soldiering skills were taught, emphasis was on French and mathematics. Only one course in strategy was required during the senior year. Allardice explained, "Unlike today's army, there were no post-graduate advanced schools for an officer to enhance his knowledge of tactics and strategy." Cadets who received the highest grades at West Point went into the engineer corps. The rest were posted into the infantry, cavalry, or artillery. Usually sent to some isolated fort in the West, an officer would rarely see more than 100 soldiers together at any time.

Pre-Civil War U.S. army officers never practiced large-scale maneuvers because the small army was scattered across the continent. Civil War generals received on-the-job training during battles. The Mexican War provided few lessons that could be applied to the Civil War. The smoothbore musket used in the Mexican War had a range of 100 yards. The Civil War rifle, with its range of 500 yards, was used with deadly effectiveness, but Civil War generals seldom altered their tactics to reflect the harsh reality of the rifled musket.

Allardice analyzed the experience and qualifications of some future famous generals. At the Battle of First Manassas, Union commanding officer Irvin McDowell, who had never commanded troops in battle, suddenly was asked to lead an army of 35,000 in a decisive battle. Major General John Charles Fremont, "The Pathfinder," had very limited service in the Mexican War was never a West Pointer, but was given command over a vast area of Missouri and the area west for one reason—politics. Fremont was the 1856 Republican candidate for U.S. president, but turned out to be a complete failure as a general.

William Tecumseh Sherman graduated from West Point with a fine academic record, but nether commanded 50 men nor saw a battle before 1861. He rose to an important command early in the war due to political influence. His older brother, John Sherman, was an influential Republican congressman from Ohio. U.S. Grant was a failure in several civilian occupations. Poli-

tics and luck gave Grant an opportunity to be an officer. Elihu Washburne, U. S. congressman from Galena, recommended Grant as a brigadier general. Allardice observed, "The Union was accidentally saved with this appointment."

The Union commander of all forces in 1861 was George B. McClellan, "the young Napoleon." His spotless record before the Civil War indicated that he was a brilliant scholar and good engineer officer. This early success was deceptive. Allardice claimed, "Before the war, McClellan was in the army 10 years, only rose to the rank of captain, and never commanded more than a company into battle." Before 1861, Robert E Lee earned a reputation as a good engineer and staff officer, but as a commander Lee had virtually no experience leading large numbers of troops.

Some Civil War generals—like Lee, Jackson, Grant, and Sherman—achieved great fame and glory in spite of deficiencies of training and education. Allardice said that he concentrated on political generals more than poltroons or patriots because politics was such an important factor in the decision of who became a Civil War general.

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 DALE K. PHILLIPS (continued from page 1)

maintaining Union control of New Orleans. His accomplishing this goal secured the southern anchor of the Anaconda plan and contributed much towards the securing of the Mississippi River by Union forces in July 1863. If Confederate forces had successfully retaken New Orleans in 1862—thus regaining access to the city's population, foundries, banks, and European connections—the outcome of that conflict might have been very different.

A native of Jersey City, New Jersey, Dale Phillips received his B.A. degree in American History from York College of Pennsylvania, and began his career in the National Park Service as a seasonal interpreter at the nearby Gettysburg National Military Park. After graduation, he served as a law enforcement/interpretive ranger for the Army Corps of Engineers at Lake Shelbyville, Illinois. In 1981, he returned to the NPS as an interpreter at Fort Sumter National Monument. After three years in Charleston, Phillips was promoted to the position of supervisory park ranger/historian at Chickamauga/Chattanooga National Military Park.

In 1987, he was named manager of the Chalmette Unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve near New Orleans. In 1990, Phillips was given the responsibility of developing the new Acadian Unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. The development of this unit, authorized by Congress in 1988, called for the creation of a series of cultural centers to interpret a unique area of southwest Louisiana. The Acadian Unit headquarters, and Mr. Phillips's residence, are located in Lafayette, Louisiana. The other centers of the unit are in Eunice, Thibodaux, Charenton, and Marksville. The development of the Acadian Unit was completed in 1994.

Dale Phillips is a popular speaker on the lecture circuit, and has written articles for professional journals. Many members of this Round Table will remember Dale from our 1995 annual battlefield tour to Charleston, when he so ably served us as a tour guide.



## The New Books

Compiled by C. Robert Douglas



- Guelzo, Allen C. *The Crisis of the American Republic — A History of the Civil War and Reconstruction Era*. St. Martin's Press. 1995. \$22.50.
- Hedrick, David T. and Gordon Barry Davis, Jr., eds. *I'm Surrounded by Methodists: The Diaries of Chaplain John H.W. Stuckenberg (145th Pennsylvania Volunteers)*. Thomas Publications. 1995. Pbk. \$16.95.
- Hollandsworth, James G., Jr. *The Louisiana Native Guards — The Black Military Experience During the Civil War*. LSU Press. 1995. \$24.95.
- Hoogenboom, Ari. *Rutherford B. Hayes: Warrior and President*. U. of Kansas Press. 1995. \$45.
- Joslyn, Mauriel P. *Captives Immortal: The Story of Six Hundred Confederate Officers and the United States Prisoner of War Policy*. White Mane Publ. Co. 1996. \$29.95.
- Koon, George W. *Old Glory and The Stars and Bars — Stories of The Civil War*. U. of South Carolina Press. 1995. \$34.95.
- Longacre, Edward. *General John Buford — A Military Biography*. Stackpole Books. 1995. \$24.95.
- Longacre, Edward. *Pickett — Leader of the Charge: A Biography of General George E. Pickett, C.S.A.* White Mane Publ. Co. 1995. \$24.95.
- Massey, Mary Elizabeth. *Women in the Civil War*. U. of Nebraska Press. 1994. Pbk. \$14.95. Original of 1966.

**The Sixth Annual Civil War Symposium of the Kankakee Valley Civil War Round Table** will be held on Saturday, April 5 at the River Oaks Banquet Hall in Kankakee, Illinois. It begins at 9 a.m. and runs until about 5 p.m. Speakers will include Dale Phillips (our March speaker, who will be speaking in Kankakee, on "The Battle of Chickamauga"), Frank Crawford ("Hospitals & Hospital Steamers"), William E. Parrish ("Frank Blair: Lincoln's Conservative"), Mike Priest ("The Battle of the Wilderness"), and H. Scott Wolfe ("The 2nd Harpers Ferry Raid").

The cost is \$40 for preregistered adult, \$20 for preregistered students, and \$45 at the door. For information call Art Schumacher, from 8 a.m.—4 p.m., at 708-757-7120, or Wayne Carlson, from 5–8 p.m., at 815-939-1551.

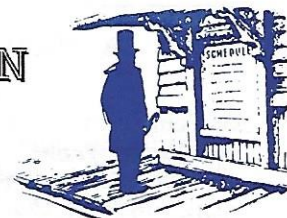
### Schimmelfennig Boutique

The history of The Round Table, *The Civil War Round Table: Fifty Years of Scholarship and Fellowship*, by Barbara Hughett, is available for \$30 per copy. You may purchase the book at the monthly meeting or order it from Morningside Bookshop, 260 Oak Street, Dayton, Ohio 45401 (1-800-648-9710). Add \$2.50 for postage and handling.

In addition to The Round Table history and *The Continuing Civil War*, the essays from the Fiftieth Anniversary Proceedings, the following items are available at each monthly meeting: Lapel pins, Mugs, Meeting Tapes, Civil War Buff posters and T-Shirts, CWRT T-shirts, polos, and sweatshirts.

Proceeds from the sale of these items go to support the programs of The Civil War Round Table.

## BULLETIN BOARD



### FUTURE MEETINGS

Regular meetings are held at the Union League Club, 65 West Jackson Boulevard, the second Friday in each month, except as noted.

March 14: Dale K. Phillips on "Benjamin Butler and the Occupation of New Orleans"

April 11: David Ruth on "The Army of Northern Virginia Matures: The Peninsular Campaign of 1862"

April 30–May 4: Annual Battlefield Tour: Richmond

May 9: William J. Cooper on "Jefferson Davis"

June 13: Mark Grimsley on "Sherman's March to the Sea"

### NEW MEMBERS

Maurice Dickenson, 6808 N. Lehigh, Chicago, IL 60646, 773-631-8072

Russell J. Miller, 10345 S. Western Avenue, Chicago, IL 60643, 773-238-8966

Walter Roth, 1110 Lake Shore Drive #35-S, Chicago, IL 60611 312-587-8888

Jack Wisner, 1722 N. Patton Avenue, Arlington Heights, IL 60004 847-394-3979

### Changes of Address

Charles Brannen, S.J., Colombiere Center, P.O. Box 139, Clarkston, MI 48347, 810-625-5611 (until May or June)

Lowell Reidenbaugh, 230 S. Brentwood Boulevard, #16-C, St. Louis, MO 63105-1638

**The Perryville Battlefield Preservation Association** is sponsoring its first Civil War seminar, to be held in Perryville from May 30–June 1. Among the speakers are Edwin C. Bearss, Mark Grimsley, and Kent Masterson Brown. The \$200 fee includes sessions and meals, which will take place at historic sites throughout the battlefield. For information, write The PBPA, P.O. Box 65, Perryville, Kentucky 40468, or call 606-332-1862.

**The Confederate Historical Association of Belgium (CHAB)** will be celebrating its 25th anniversary with a weekend devoted to the study of American Civil War history. The international Convention will take place in Brussels on June 7–8. The theme is "Gone With the Wind ... and the True Story of the American Civil War." For information, write Daniel J. Frankignoul, President, CHAB, 64 Clos des Peupliers, 1200 Brussels, Belgium, or call Brooks Davis (312-944-5082).

**Mini News**, the newsletter of the American Civil War Round Table of Australia, reports that, as of this past December, there were approximately 1,500 sites on the Internet with Civil War links which had been indexed by the United States Civil War Center at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.